

# WHERE HE IS

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## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Small container, timer, pre-written papers for ice breaker
- Paper, pens, markers
- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

## ICE BREAKER: “NO PLACE I’D RATHER BE” PICTURES

Write out some of the following words and phrases on pieces of paper, fold them and place them in a small container. Each one is a possible ending for the phrase “I’d rather be...”. Feel free to add some of your own.

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Listening to music         | • With my golden retriever |
| • In Paris                   | • Sleeping                 |
| • Watching cat videos online | • Gaming                   |
| • Alone                      | • At the beach             |
| • Reading a book             | • Dancing                  |
| • Eating pizza               | • With my best friend      |

The teens take turns selecting a piece of paper from the container and then drawing a picture illustrating the phrase written on it for the others to guess at. Or, allow them to invent their own ending for the phrase if they wish. They may draw blank lines depicting the words of the phrase and fill in parts of it if they are guessed. All other clues should be drawn (not acted out, and word bubbles cannot contain actual characters). The teens have one minute to draw/guess each phrase. Depending on how quick your teens are to guess, you may want to be more or less strict about the exact words, and/or allow more or less than one minute.

FOR SMALL GROUPS, SIMPLY GIVE THE TEENS AS MANY TURNS AS TIME ALLOWS AND DON’T KEEP SCORE. FOR LARGER GROUPS, DIVIDE INTO TEAMS WHERE TEAM-MATES TRY TO GUESS MORE PHRASES THAN THE OTHER TEAMS.

## 622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

## DISCUSSION: IT’S WHO YOU’RE WITH

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- Ask your teens to respond to the expression, “*It’s not where you are, it’s who you’re with*”. What does the expression mean? Do you agree? Share an example of a time in your life when this saying was shown to be either true or false.

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A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- We might all wish to be in a great location doing something we enjoy, but what can make any location and activity truly enjoyable is being with someone we love. Perhaps you've fulfilled a dream of spending time with a popular group of peers only to discover that you really missed being with an old but less-popular friend. Or perhaps you've found yourself in an unpleasant situation with a friend which was made fun because you could laugh about it together. This is a great opportunity to share a story of your own.

## THE LESSON: MATTHEW 21-22

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

(IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP RESPOND TO QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE RAISED DURING THIS UNIT, WE RECOMMEND "DISCOVERING THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: A HANDS-ON APPROACH, VOLUME 3: SPECIAL OCCASIONS" BY SUE CARELESS.)

Picture this: Jesus, on the night of his arrest, was together with his disciples to eat the Passover. He knew what was about to happen and he knew how sad and confused they would be when it did. There was a lot that still needed to be said, and very little time in which to say it. The Gospel of John takes five chapters to tell us about Jesus' "farewell discourse", which includes these well known words:

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

The deepest longing of the believing heart is to be with the Lord. We cling to the promise that one day, when all the troubles of this world have passed, we will get to be *with him*.

The invitation to be with the Lord goes out to all. Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Many of his parables (like the one we'll look at today) remind us of God's generous love, leading us to answer the question of how we will respond to his divine invitation.

Refer to Matthew 21:31-32,45-46, 22:1-10.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What was the context of this parable? To whom was it told? What was their attitude towards Jesus?
- In the parable, who gets invited to the feast?
- In the parable, which are the people who *do not* get to come? Why not?
- In the parable, which are the people who *do* get to come?
- What point do you think Jesus was making with this parable? What meaning does it have for us today?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- This was one of three parables told about "the rejection of the King" in the hearing of the chief priests and Pharisees. It follows Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his cleansing of the temple. The Pharisees had seen

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evidence that Jesus was who he claimed to be (21:32), but they did not wish to acknowledge his authority. They recognized themselves in Jesus' parables (21:45), but instead of responding with repentance, they wanted to have him arrested – and ultimately killed.

- Initially, the invitation list was specific. Certain people only were on the list. But when the original invitees treated that invitation with contempt, the invitation list was expanded – to include everyone who could be found, “both bad and good” (22:10), that is, everyone who was willing to come. This parable points to the history of Israel, God’s chosen people. While scripture tells us many inspiring stories of faithfulness among heroes of Israel, it also tells of numerous time in which God and his prophets were rejected and mistreated, just like the servants in this parable. The New Testament tells of the Gospel being offered “to the Jew first” but then to all (Romans 1:16).
- The people who do not get to come to the feast are the ones who do not want to come. Verse 3 tells us “they would not come”. Then, when they were asked again, “they paid no attention and went off” to other things (v5), and shockingly, some of them “seized his servants, treated them shamefully and killed them” (v6). C.S. Lewis wrote, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened”.
- The people who ended up at the wedding feast were not the people who had the right connections, nor even the people who were “good”, but rather those found along the roads who wished to come to the feast who were gathered in by the servants of the king. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”.
- Jesus was calling the Pharisees to recognize that they, like many of their ancestors, were rejecting God, and were in fact treating his grace with contempt. Those upon whom the Pharisees looked down were to be invited to receive the grace that they had rejected. The parable leaves its hearers (then and now) with the question, “How will you respond to the divine invitation?” Do we want to be with God? Or would we rather go our own way? Or worse, would we respond to his grace with hostility? Those who have accepted the gracious invitation of God look with hope to a future with him in heaven.

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

## PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

**Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.**

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer).)

**Have you responded to the divine invitation? If you haven't, it's not too late to pray to God, repenting of your sins, and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus on your behalf. If you have, ask God to create in you a deeper longing to spend time with him now, and rejoice in remembering that one day you will go to be with him always. Close your time with the following prayer:**

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*Give rest, O Christ, at the last to us thy servants with thy Saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting; where thou, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.* (ADAPTED FROM THE PRAYER FROM THE ORDER FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, P. 600)

## CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

### MATTHEW 21-22: **WILL YOU COME TO THE FEAST?**

**21** <sup>31</sup>Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterwards change your minds and believe him...

<sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

<sup>46</sup>And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

**22** <sup>1</sup>And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup>"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup>and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.' <sup>5</sup>But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' <sup>10</sup>And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.